SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO: Sir, the GAIL has entered into a joint ventue agreement with the HPCL. The GAIL is also supposed to tie-up with the IOC and the BPCL. So, I would like to know from the hon. Minister as to why there is so much delay in tying up with the IOC and the BPCL in developing the markets of Rajahmundry, Vijayawada, Kakinada, Amalapuram areas.

SHRI RAM NAIK: Sir, this supplemenary has nothing to do with the main question, which is about the pipeline. The pipeline is expected to be completed in August, 2003. I can share this information with the House that we are going to complete it by April-end. So, it will be done early. That work will be beneficial for Andhra Pradesh.

*110. [*The Questioner (Shri Anil Sharma) was absent for Answer vide page.* 30 *infra*]

Privatisation of public sector banks

*111. SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH:†
DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:

Will the Minister of FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to privatise the public sector banks as the tenth plan has advocated repeal of the Bank Nationalisation Act to enable banks to become ordinary companies operating under the Companies Act;

(b) if so, whether Government have considered the suggestions. and

(c) if so, when final decision in this regard likely to be taken?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) to (c) No, Sir. No proposal to privatise public sector banks is under consideration of the Government. What is proposed is an amendment of the Banking Companies (Acquisition and Transfer of Undertakings) Act, 1970/1980, with a view to modifying the stipulation of minimum prescribed Government shareholding in nationalised banks from 51% to 33%. This is to enable nationalised banks to raise capital from the market without affecting the public sector character

†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri K. Natwar Singh.

of these banks. Accordingly, Banking Companies (Acquisition and Transfer of Undertakings) and Financial Institutions Laws Amendment Bill, 2000 was introduced in the Lok Sabha. This Bill was referred to the Standing Committee on Finance in December, 2000. The report of the Committee is still awaited.

SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH: Sir, I would like to compliment the hon. Minister for the skilful manner in which he has given the answer because it says much and conveys very little. I just want to know—I am aware of the fact that he is not in-charge of the Standing Committee—whether he has any broad idea as to when the report of the Standing Committee could be expected.

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: Sir, I must understand that the question of public sector banks is not related to the share holding. The public sector banks are not governed by the Company Law. Therefore, irrespective of the amount of share holding there, they do not change their character.

Secondly, this matter is with the Standing Committee on Finance, and unless we receive a direction of advice or guidance from the Standing Committee, there is nothing that we can do as a Government.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question Hour is over.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO STARRED QUESTIONS

Delay in tax refunds

*103. SHRI RAJU PARMAR:
SHRI BHAGATRAM MANHAR:

Will the Minister of FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item captioned, "Inordinate delay in most tax refunds, shows survey", appearing in the Economic Times, New Delhi dated the 24th December, 2002;